A GRAINE OF MVSTARD-SEED,

OR

THE LEAST MEASVRE OF GRACE *that is or can bee effectuall to* Saluation.

By W. PERKINS.

LONDON,
Printed by Felix Kingston, for Ralph Iackson and Hugh Burwell. 1597.

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To the right Honorable

and vertuous Lady, the Lady *Margaret*, Counteſſe of *Cumberland*, grace and peace.

RIght Honorable, The kingdome of heauen, of which the ſcripture ſpeaketh ſo oft, is properly a certaine ſtate or condition, whereby we ſtand in the fauour and loue of God, in and by Chriſt. And this kingdome is compared to a graine of muſtard-ſeede, to teach vs that a man is euen at that inſtant already entred into the Kingdome of Heauen, when the Lord that good husband-man hath caſt but ſome little portion of faith or repentance into the ground of the heart: Yea though it bee but as one graine of muſtard-ſeede. Of this little graine I haue penned this treatiſe, in quantitie anſwera-

ble thereto: and now I present the same to your Ladyship, not to supplie your want (for I hope you are stored with many graines of this kinde) but to performe some dutie on my part. Hoping therefore that your Ladyship will read and accept the same, I take my leaue, commending you to the blessing and protection of the almightie.

Your Honours to command

William Perkins.

A GRAINE OF MVSTARD-

ſeede, or the leaſt meaſure of grace that is, or *can be effectuall to ſaluation.*

IT is a verie neceſſary point to be knowen, *what is the leaſt meaſure of grace that can befall the true childe of God, leſſer then which there is no grace effectuall to ſaluation.* For firſt of all, the right vnderſtãding of this is the verie foundation of true cõfort vnto all troubled & touched conſciences. Secondly, it is a notable means to ſtir vp thankfulnes in them that haue any grace at all: whẽ they ſhall in examination of thẽſelues conſider that they haue receiued of God the leaſt meaſure of grace, or more. Thirdly, it will be an inducement, and a ſpurre vnto many careleſſe and vnrepentant perſons, to embrace the Goſpell, and to begin repentance for their ſinnes; when they ſhall perceiue, and that by the worde of God, that God accepts the very ſeeds and rudiments of faith and repentance at the firſt, though they be but in meaſure as a graine of muſtard-ſeed. Now then for the opening and cleering of this point, I will ſet downe ſixe ſeuerall concluſions, in ſuch order as one ſhall confirme and explane the other, and one depend vpon the other.

I. Concluſion.

A man that doth but begin to be conuerted, is euen at that inſtant the very child of God: though inwardly he be more carnall then ſpirituall.

The Expoſition.

IN a man there muſt bee conſidered three things, the ſubſtance of the bodie and ſoule, whereof a man is ſaid to conſiſt, the faculties placed in the ſoule and exercíſed in the body, as vnderſtanding, wil,

affections: the integritie and puritie of the faculties, whereby they are conformable to the will of God, and beare his Image. And ſince the fall of Adam, man is not depriued of his ſubſtance, or of the powers and faculties of his ſoule, but onely of the third, which is the puritie of nature. And therefore the conuerſion of a ſinner, whereof the concluſion ſpeaketh, is not the change of the ſubſtance of man, or the faculties of the ſoule: but a renewing and reſtoring of that puritie and holineſſe which was loſt by mans fall, with the aboliſhment of that naturall corruption which is in all the powers of the ſoule. This is the worke of God, and of God alone, and that on this manner. Firſt of all when it pleaſeth God to worke a change in any, hee doeth it not firſt in one part, then in another, as hee that repaireth a decayed houſe by peece-meale: but the worke, both for the beginning, continuance, and accompliſhment, is in the whole man, and euery part at once, eſpecially in the minde, conſcience, will, and affection: as on the contrarie, when Adam loſt the Image of God, hee loſt it in euerie parte. Secondly, the conuerſion of a ſinner is not wrought all at one inſtant, but in continuance of time, and that by certaine meaſures and degrees. And a man is in the firſt degree of his conuerſion, when the Holy Ghoſt by the meanes of the worde, inſpires him with ſome ſpirituall motions, and beginnes to regenerate and renew the inwarde powers of his ſoule. And hee may in this caſe verie fittely be compared to the night in the firſt dawning of the day, in which though the darkeneſſe remaine and bee more in quantitie than the light, yet the Sunne hath alreadie caſt ſome beames of light into the aire, whereupon we tearme it, the breaking of the day. Now then the verie point which I teach, is that a man at this inſtant and in this verie ſtate (God as yet hauing but laide certaine beginnings of true conuerſion in his heart) is the very child of God, and that not onely in the eternall purpoſe of God (as all the elect are) but indeede by actuall adoption: and this is plaine by a manifeſt reaſon. There bee foure ſpeciall workes of grace in euery childe of God; his vnion with Chriſt, his adoption, iuſtification, and conuerſion, and theſe foure are wrought all at one inſtant, ſo as for order of time, neither goes before nor after

after other: and yet in regarde of order of nature, vnion with Chriſt, iuſtification, and adoption, goe before the inward conuerſion of a ſinner, it being the fruit and effect of them all. Vpon this it followeth neceſſarily, that a ſinner in the verie firſt act of his conuerſion, is iuſtified, adopted, and incorporated into the myſticall bodie of Chriſt. In the parable of the prodigall ſonne, the father with ioy receiues his wicked childe, but when? ſurely when hee ſaw him comming a farre off, and when as yet hee had made no confeſsion or humiliation to his father, but onely had conceiued with himſelfe a purpoſe to returne and to ſay, Father, I haue ſinned againſt heauen and againſt thee, &c. And Paul ſaith of many of the Corinthians, that hee could not ſpeake vnto them as ſpirituall men, but as carnall, euen babes in Chriſt. 1. Cor. 3. 1.

II. Concluſion.

The firſt materiall beginnings of the conuerſion of a ſinner, or the ſmalleſt meaſure of renewing grace, haue the promiſes of this life, and the life to come.

The Expoſition.

THe beginnings of conuerſion muſt be diſtinguiſhed. Some are beginnings of preparation, ſome beginnings of compoſition. Beginnings of preparation are ſuch as bring vnder, tame, and ſubdue the ſtubbornneſſe of mans nature, without making any change at all: of this ſorte are the accuſations of the conſcience by the miniſterie of the Lawe, teares and terrours ariſing thence, compunction of heart, which is the apprehenſion of Gods anger againſt ſinne. Now theſe and the like I exclude in the concluſion, for though they goe before to prepare a ſinner to his conuerſion following, yet are they no graces of God, but fruits of the law, that is the miniſtery of death, and of an accuſing conſcience. Beginnings of compoſition I tearme all thoſe inward motions and inclinations of Gods ſpirit, that follow after the worke of the law vpon the conſcience: and riſe vpon the meditation of the goſpell, that promiſeth righteouſnes & life euerlaſting by Chriſt: out of which

motions the conuerſion of a ſinner ariſeth, and of which it conſiſteth: what theſe are it ſhall afterward appeare. Againe, grace muſt be diſtinguiſhed: it is twofolde, reſtraining grace, or renuing grace. Reſtraining grace I tearme certaine common gifts of God, ſeruing only to order and frame the outward conuerſation of men to the Law of God, or ſeruing to bereaue men of excuſe in the day of iudgement. By this kind of grace, heathen men haue been liberal, iuſt, ſober, valiant. By it men liuing in the Church of God, haue bin enlightned, and hauing taſted of the good word of God, haue reioyced therein, & for a time outwardly conformed thēſelues thereto. Renuing grace is not common to all men, but proper to the elect, and it is a gift of Gods ſpirit, whereby the corruption of ſinne is not only reſtrained, but alſo mortified, and the decaied Image of God reſtored. Now then the concluſion muſt only be vnderſtood of the ſecond, and not of the firſt: for though a man haue neuer ſo much of this reſtraining grace, yet vnleſſe he haue the ſpirit of Chriſt to create faith in the heart, and to ſanctifie him, he is as farre from ſaluation as any other. Now then the ſenſe and meaning of the concluſion is, that the verie leaſt meaſure of ſauing grace, and the very beginnings or ſeedes of regeneration doe declare, and after a ſort giue title to men, of all the mercifull promiſes of God, whether they concerne this life or the life to come: and therefore are approoued of God, if they be in trueth, and accepted as greater meaſures of grace. That which our Sauiour Chriſt ſaith of the worke of miracles, *If yee haue faith as a graine of Muſtard-ſeede, yee ſhall ſay vnto this mountaine, Remooue hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remooue*, muſt by the law of equall proportion be applied to faith, repentance, the feare of God, and all other graces, if they be truely wrought in the heart, though they be but as ſmall as one little graine of Muſtard-ſeede, they ſhall be ſufficiently effectuall to bring forth good workes, for which they are ordained. The Prophet Eſai 42. 3. ſaith, that Chriſt *ſhall not quench the ſmoking flaxe, nor breake the bruiſed reede.* Let the compariſon bee marked: fire in flaxe muſt be both little and weake, in quantitie as a ſparke or twaine, that can not cauſe a flame but onely a ſmoake, ſpecially in a matter ſo eaſie to burne. Here then is ſignified, that the giftes and graces of Gods ſpirit, that are both for meaſure

ſure and ſtrength as a ſparke or twaine of fire, ſhall not bee neglected, but rather accepted and cherished by Christ. When our Sauiour Christ heard the young man make a confeſsion of a practiſe but of outward and ciuill righteouſneſſe, *he looked vpon him and loued him*: and when hee heard the Scribe to ſpeake diſcreetly but one good ſpeech, that to loue God with all the heart is aboue all ſacrifices, he ſaid vnto him, *That he was not farre from the kingdome of heauen.* Therefore no doubt, he will loue with a more ſpeciall loue, and accept as the good ſubiects of his kingdome, thoſe that haue receiued a further mercie of God to bee borne a new of water and of the ſpirit.

III. Concluſion.

A conſtant and earneſt deſire to be reconciled to God, to beleeue and to repent, if it be in a touched heart, is in acceptation with God, as reconciliation, faith, repentance it ſelfe.

The Expoſition.

LVſt or deſire is twofolde, naturall and ſupernaturall. Naturall is that whoſe beginning and obiect is in nature, that is, which ariſeth of the naturall will of man, and affecteth ſuch things as are thought to be good according to the light of nature. And this kind of deſire hath his degrees, yet ſo as they are all limited within the compaſſe of nature. Some deſire riches, honours, pleaſures, ſome learning and knowledge: becauſe it is the light and perfection of the minde: ſome goe further and ſeeke after the vertues of iuſtice, temperance, liberalitie, &c. and thus many heathen men haue excelled. Some againe deſire true happineſſe, as *Balaam* did, who wiſhed to dye the death of the righteous: becauſe it is the propertie of nature to ſeeke the preſeruation of it ſelfe. But here nature ſtaies it ſelfe: for where the minde reueales not, the will affects not. Supernaturall deſires are ſuch as both for their beginning and obiect, are aboue nature: for their beginning is from the holy Ghoſt, and the obiect or matter about which they are conuerſant, are things diuine and ſpirituall, which concerne the kingdome of heauen:

heauen: and of this kinde are the deſires of which I ſpeake in this place. Againe, that we may not be deceiued in our deſires, but may the better diſcerne them from flittering & fleeting motions, I adde three reſtraints. Firſt of all, the deſire of reconciliation, the deſire to beleeue, or the deſire to repent, &c. muſt be conſtant and haue continuance, otherwiſe it may iuſtly be ſuſpected. Secondly, it muſt be earneſt and ſerious, though not alwaies, yet at ſometimes, that wee may be able to ſay with Dauid, *My ſoule deſireth after thee, O Lord, as the thirſtie land.* And, *As the Hart braieth after the riuers of water, ſo panteth my ſoule after thee O God. My ſoule thirſteth for God, euen the liuing God.* Thirdly, it muſt be in a touched heart: for when a man is touched in conſcience, the heart is caſt downe, and (as much as it can) it withdrawes it ſelfe from God. For this cauſe, if then there bee any ſpirituall motions whereby the heart is lift vp vnto God, they are without doubt from the ſpirit of God. Thus then I auouch, that the deſire of reconciliation with God in Chriſt, is reconciliation it ſelfe: the deſire to beleeue, is faith indeede: and the deſire to repent, repentance it ſelfe. But marke how. A deſire to bee reconciled is not reconciliation in nature (for the deſire is one thing, and reconciliation is another) but in Gods acceptation: for if we being touched throughly for our ſinnes, do deſire to haue them pardoned, and to be at one with God, God accepts vs as reconciled. Againe, deſire to beleeue, it is not faith in nature, but onely in Gods acceptatiõ, God accepting the will for the deed. That this doctrine is the will and word of God, it appeares by theſe reaſons. Firſt of al, God hath annexed a promiſe of bleſſednes, and of life euerlaſting, to the deſire of grace. Matth. 5. *Bleſſed are they which hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſſe, for they ſhall be ſatisfied.* Iohn. 7. verſ. 38. *If any man thirſt, let him come to me and drinke.* Reuel. 21. *I will giue vnto him which is athirſt of the well of the water of life freely.*

Now what is this, to thirſt? Properly it is, when wee are in a drought or drineſſe, and want drinke to refreſh vs, to deſire it. And therefore by a reſemblance, they are ſaid to thirſt after righteouſneſſe, that want it and would faine haue it. And they thirſt after Chriſt, that feele themſelues out of Chriſt, and deſire, yea long after the bloud of Chriſt, that they might bee refreſhed with it in their conſciences.

conſciences. Here then we ſee that the deſire of mercie in the want of mercie, is the obtaining of mercie; and the deſire to beleeue in the want of faith, is faith: Though as yet thou want firme & liuely graace, yet art thou not altogether voyd of grace, if thoucanſt deſire it, thy deſire is the ſeed, conception, or budde of that which thou wanteſt: now is the ſpring time of the ingrafted word or the immortall ſeede caſt into the furrowes of thy heart: wait but a while, vſing good meanes, and thou ſhalt ſee that leaues, bloſſomes, and fruites will ſhortly follow after. Secondly, the deſire of any good thing is accepted of God as the liuely inuocation of his holy name, Pſalm. 10. *God heareth the deſires of the poore.* Pſalm. 145. *He will fulfill the deſire of them that feare him.* When Moſes ſaid nothing, but onely deſired in heart the helpe and protection of God at the redde ſea, the Lord ſaid vnto him: Why crieſt thou vnto me. Exodus 14. And when we know not to pray as wee ought, Paul ſaith, that the ſpirit maketh requeſt by the inward groanes of the heart. Rom. 8. 26. Hence I gather, that whē a man in his weakneſſe praies with ſighes and groanes, for the gift of liuely faith, the want whereof he findes in himſelfe; his very prayer on this manner made, is as truly in acceptation with GOD, as the prayer made in liuely faith. Thirdly, to the teſtimonie of Scripture, I adde the teſtimonies of godly and learned men, not to prooue the doctrine in hand; but to ſhew a conſent, and to prooue thus much that the thing which I auouch is no priuate phantaſie of any man. *Aug. ſaith, *Let thy deſire be before him, and thy father which ſeeth in ſecret ſhall reward thee openly: for thy deſire is thy praier, and if thy deſire be continuall, thy praier is continuall.* He addes further in the ſame place, that, *the deſire is a continuall voyce, and the crie of the heart, and the inward inuocation of God, which may be made without intermiſſion.* Againe, [b] *The whole life of a good Chriſtian, is an holy will and deſire. And that which thou deſireſt thou ſeeſt not: but by deſiring, art (as it were) inlarged and made capable, that when it ſhall come which thou ſhalt ſee, thou maiſt be filled.* [c] Bernard ſaith, *What, is not deſire a voice? Yea a very ſtrong voice. God heareth the deſire of the poore, and a cōtinual deſire, though we ſpeak nothing, is a voice cōtinued.* [d] Luther ſaith, *Chriſt is thē truly omnipotent, & then truly raignes in vs, whē we are ſo weak that we can ſcarce giue any grone. For* Paul ſaith, *that*

*Pſal. 36.

b Expoſit. Epiſt. Iohn. tract. 4. de cap. 3.

c Super. cant. Ser. 34

d Tom. 4. pag. 124.

one

one such groane is a strong cry in the eares of God, filling both heauen and earth. e Againe, very few know how weake and small faith, and hope is vnder the crosse and in temptation. For it appeares then to be as smoking flaxe, which a good blast of winde would presently put out: but such as beleeue in these combats, and terrors against hope, vnder hope, that is, opposing themselues by faith in the promise of Christ against the feeling of sinne, and the wrath of God, doe finde afterward that this little sparke of faith (as it appeares to reason, which hardly perceiueth it) is peraduenture as the whole element of fire which filleth all heauen and swalloweth vp all terrors and sinnes.

e Ib. fol. 156

f Ib. fol. 300

f Againe, the more we find our vnworthinesse, and the lesse we find the promises to belong vnto vs, the more must we desire them, being assured that this desire doth greatly please God, who desireth and willeth that his grace should be earnestly desired. This doth faith, which iudgeth it a pretious thing, and therefore greatly hungereth and thirsteth after it, and so obtaines it. For God is delighted to fill the hungrie with good things, and to send the rich emptie away. h Theodore Beza saith, If thou finde not thine heart inwardly touched, pray that it may be touched: for then must thou know that this desire is a pledge of the fathers good will to thee: i Kemnitius saith, When I haue a good desire, though it doe scarcely shew it selfe in some little and slender sigh, I must bee assured that the spirit of God is present and worketh his good worke. k Vrsinus saith, Faith in the most holy men in this life is vnperfect and weak. Yet neuertheless, whosoeuer feeles in his heart an earnest desire to beleeue, and a striuing against his naturall doubtings, both can and must assure himselfe that he is indued with true faith. Againe, Wicked men doe not desire the grace of the holy spirit, whereby they may resist sinne. And therefore they are iustly depriued of it: for he that earnestly desireth the holy Ghost, hath it alreadie: because this desire of the spirit cannot be but from the spirit: as it is said, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousnes, for they shall be satisfied. l Bradford saith, Thy sins are vndoubtedly pardoned, &c. for God hath giuen thee a penitēt and beleeuing heart: that is, an heart which desireth to repent, and beleeue: for such an one is taken of him (he accepting the will for the deed) for a penitent and beleeuing heart indeed. m Taffine saith, Our faith may bee so small and weak, as it doth not yet bring foorth fruites that may be liuely felt of vs: but if they which feel thēselues in such estate, desire to haue

h Resp. ad Acta Col. loq. Monpel.

i Locor. cō. par. 1.

k Catechis.

l Epistle to Carelesse.

m Booke of the markes of Gods children.

haue these feelings [namely of Gods fauour and loue] if they aske them at Gods hands by praier: this desire and praier are testimonies that the spirit of God is in them, and that they haue faith alreadie: for is such a desire a fruit of the flesh, or of the spirit? it is of the holy spirit, who bringeth it forth only in such as he dwels in, &c. Then these holie desires and praiers being the motions of the holy Ghost in vs, are testimonies of our faith, although they seeme to vs small and weake. As the woman that feeleth the mouing of a child in her body, though very weake, assureth her selfe that she hath conceiued, and that she goeth with a liue child: so if we haue these motions, these holy affections, & desires before mentioned, let vs not doubt but that we haue the holy Ghost (who is the author of them) dwelling in vs, & consequently that we haue also faith. Again he saith, *If thou hast begun to hate and flee sinne, if thou feelest that thou art displeased at thine infirmities, and corruptions: if hauing offended God thou feelest a griefe & a sorrow for it: if thou desire to abstaine: if thou auoidest the occasions: if thou trauailest to doe thy endeuour: if thou prayest to God to giue thee grace: all these holy affections proceeding from none other then from the spirit of God, ought to be so many pledges, and testimonies that he is in thee.* *Master Knokes saith, *Albeit your paines sometimes be so horrible that you find no release nor comfort neither in spirit nor bodie, yet if thy heart can onely sob vnto God, despaire not, you shall obtaine your harts desire. And destitute you are not of faith: for at such time as the flesh, naturall reason, the law of God, the present torment, the diuell at once do crie, God is angrie, & therefore there is neither help nor remedy to be hoped for at his hands: at such time, I say, to sob vnto God is the demonstration of the secret seede of God, which is hid in Gods elect children: & that only sob is vnto God a more acceptable sacrifice, then without this crosse, to giue our bodies to be burnt euen for the truethes sake.* More testimonies might bee alleaged, but these shall suffice. Against this point of doctrine it may bee alleaged: that, if desire to beleeue in our weakenesse bee faith indeede; then some are iustified and may be saued wanting a liuely apprehension and full perswasion of Gods mercie in Christ. *Answere.* Iustifying faith in regarde of his nature is alwaies one and the same, and the essentiall propertie thereof is to apprehend Christ with his benefites, and to assure the verie conscience thereof. And

*Psal. 6.

therefore

therfore without ſome apprehenſion and aſſurance there can be no iuſtification or ſaluation in them that for age are able to beleeue. Yet there be certaine degrees, and meaſures of true faith. There is a ſtrong faith, which cauſeth a full apprehenſion and perſwaſion of Gods mercie in Chriſt. This meaſure of faith the Lord vouchſafed *Abraham*, *Dauid*, *Paul*, the Prophets, and Apoſtles, and Martyrs of God. It were a bleſſed thing, if all beleeuers might attaine to this height of liuely faith, to ſay with Paul, I am perſwaded, that neither life, nor death, nor any thing els, ſhall be able to ſeperate vs from the loue of God in Chriſt: but all cannot; therefore there is another degree of faith lower then the former, and yet true faith, called a little or weake faith, and it alſo hath a power to apprehend and apply the promiſe of ſaluation, but as yet by reaſon of weakeneſſe, it is infolded (as it were) and wrapt vp in the heart, as the leafe and bloſſome in the bud. For ſuch perſons as haue this weak faith, can ſay indeede, that they beleeue their ſinnes to be pardonable, and that they deſire to haue them pardoned: but as yet they cannot ſay, that they are without all doubt pardoned. And yet the mercie of God is not wanting vnto them. For in that they doe, and can deſire, and indeuour to apprehend, they doe indeede apprehend; God accepting the deſire to doe the thing, for the thing done. This which I ſay, will the better appeare if the grounds thereof bee conſidered: Faith doth not iuſtifie in reſpect of it ſelfe, becauſe it is an action, or vertue: or becauſe it is ſtrong, liuely, and perfect: but in reſpect of the obiect thereof, namely Chriſt crucified, whom faith apprehendeth as he is ſet foorth vnto vs in the Word and Sacraments. It is Chriſt that is the author, and matter of our iuſtice, and it is he that applieth the ſame vnto vs: as for faith in vs, it is but an inſtrument to apprehend and receiue that which Chriſt for his part offereth and giueth. Therefore, if faith erre not in his proper obiect, but follow the promiſe of God, though it doe weaklie apprehend, or at the leaſt cauſe a man onely to endeuour and deſire to apprehend, it is true faith, and iuſtifieth. Though our apprehenſion be neceſſarie, yet our ſaluation ſtands rather in this that God apprehends vs for his owne, then that we apprehend him. Phil. 3. verſ. 12.

One

Out of this conclusion springeth another not to be omitted, that God accepts the endeuour of the whole man to obey, for perfect obedience it selfe.

THat is, if men indeuour to please God in all things, God will not iudge their doings by the rigour of his law: but will accept their little & weake endeuour, to do that which they can do by his grace, as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But here remẽber I put this caueat, that this endeuour must be in & by the whole man; the very minde, conscience, will, and affections, doing that which they can in their kinds: and thus this endeuour, which is a fruit of the spirit, shall bee distinguished from ciuill righteonsuesse, which may bee in heathen men. The trueth of this conclusion appeares by that which the Prophet Malachi saith, that God will spare them, that feare him, as a father spares his childe: who accepts the thing done, as well done, if the childe shew his good will, to please his father, and to doe what he can.

IIII. Conclusion.

To see and feele in our selues the want of any grace, and to be greeued therefore, is the grace it selfe.

The Exposition.

VNderstand this conclusion as the former, namely, that griefe of heart for the want of any grace necessarie to saluation, is as much with God as the grace it selfe. When being in distresse, wee cannot pray as wee ought; God accepts the very groanes, sobs, and sighs of the perplexed heart, as the prayer it selfe. Rom. 8. 26. When we are grieued, because we cannot be grieued for our sinnes, it is a degree and measure of godly sorrow before God. Augustine saith well: *Sometimes our prayer is lukewarme, or rather cold and almost no prayer: may sometime it is altogether no prayer at all, and yet we cannot with griefe perceiue this in our selues: for if wee can but grieue, because we cannot pray, we now pray indeede.* Hierom saith, Com. 4. lib. 1. ad Simpl. in fine.

Then

Lib. 1. contract. Pelagium.

Then we are iust when we doe acknowledge our selues to be sinners. Againe, *This is the true wisedome of man, to know himselfe to be imperfect: And (that I may so speake) the perfection of all iust men in the flesh is imperfect.* Augustine againe saith, *That the vertue which is now in a iust man is thus far forth perfect, that vnto the perfection thereof there belongs a true acknowledgement and an humble confession of the imperfection thereof.* A broken and contrite heart after an offence, is as much with God, as if there had been no offence at all. And therefore so soone as Dauid after his grieuous fall in heauinesse of heart confessed his sinne, saying in effect but thus much: *I haue sinned*, the Prophet in the name of the Lord, pronoũceth the pardon of his sinne in heauen, and that presently.

V. Conclusion.

He that hath begun to subiect himselfe to Christ and his word, though as yet he bee ignorant in most points of religion: yet if he haue a care to increase in knowledge, and to practise that which he knoweth, he is accepted of God as a true beleeuer.

The Exposition.

SVndrie persons by the Euangelists are sayd to beleeue, which had onely seene the miracles of Christ, and as yet had made no further proceedings but to acknowledge Christ to be the Messias, and to submit themselues to him and his doctrine, which afterward should be taught. On this manner the woman of Samaria beleeued, and many of the Samaritans vpon her report: and a certaine ruler, by reason of a miracle wrought vpon his sonne, is said to beleeue, and all his houshold, Ioh. 4. 42. 52. When our Sauiour Christ commendeth the faith of the Apostles, terming it a rocke against which the gates of hell should not preuaile, it was not for the plentifull knowledge of the doctrine of saluation: for they were ignorant of many articles of faith, as namely of the death, resurrection, ascension and kingdome of Christ: but because they beleeued him to bee the sonne of God, and the sauiour of mankinde, and they had withall resolued themselues to cleaue vnto him, and the blessed

doctrine

doctrine of ſaluation which he taught, though as yet they were ignorant in many points. The holy Ghoſt commendeth the faith of *Rahab*, when ſhe receiued the ſpies. Now this her faith was indeed but a ſeed and beginning of liuely faith: for then ſhee had onely heard of the miracles done in Egypt, and of the deliuerance of the Iſraelites, and was thereupon ſmitten with a feare, and had conceiued a reſolution with her ſelfe, to ioyne her ſelfe to the Iſraelites, and to worſhip the true God. Now theſe and the like are tearmed beleeuers, vpon iuſt cauſe: for though they be ignorant as yet, yet their ignorance ſhall be no continuing or laſting ignorance: & they haue excellent ſeeds of grace, namely a purpoſe of heart to cleaue to Chriſt, and a care to profite in the doctrine of ſaluation.

VI. Concluſion.

Therefore ſaid beginnings of grace are counterfait, vnleſſe they encreaſe.

The Expoſition.

THe wickednesſe of mans nature and the depth of hypocriſie is ſuch, that a man may and can eaſily transforme himſelfe into the counterfeit and reſemblance of any grace of God. Therefore I put downe here a certaine note whereby the gifts of God may be diſcerned, namely, that they grow vp and encreaſe as the graine of Muſtard ſeed to a great tree, and beare fruit anſwerably. The grace in the heart is like the graine of Muſtard-ſeed in two things. Firſt, it is ſmall to ſee to at the beginning: ſecondly, after it is caſt into the ground of the heart, it encreaſeth ſpeedily, and ſpreads it ſelfe. Therefore, if a man at the firſt haue but ſome little feeling of his wants, ſome weake and faint deſire, ſome ſmall obedience, he muſt not let this ſparke of grace goe out: but theſe motions of the ſpirit muſt be encreaſed by the vſe of the word, ſacraments, and praier; and they muſt daily be ſtirred vp by meditating, endeuouring, ſtriuing, asking, ſeeking, knocking. The maſter deliuering his talents to his ſeruants, ſaith vnto them, Occupie till I come: and not, hide them in the earth, Matth. 25. 26. Paul vſeth an excellent ſpeech

to Timothie: I exhort thee to stirre vp the gift of God which is in thee, namely as fire is stirred vp by often blowing, and by putting too of woode, 2. Timoth. 1. 6. As for such motions of the heart that last for a weeke, or a moneth, and after vanish away, they are not to be regarded: and the Lord by the Prophet Osea complaineth of them, saying, O Ephraim, thy righteousnes is like the morning dewe.

Therefore considering, grace vnlesse it be confirmed and exercised, is indeede no grace; I will here adde certaine rules of direction that wee may the more easily put in practise the spirituall exercises of inuocation, faith, and repentance: and thereby also quicken and reuiue the seedes and beginnings of grace.

1. In what place soeuer thou art, whether alone or abroad, by day or by night, and whatsoeuer thou art doing, set thy selfe in the presence of God, let this perswasion alwaies take place in thy heart, that thou art before the liuing God: and doe thy endeuour that this perswasion may smite thy heart with awe and reuerence, & make thee afraid to sinne. This counsell the Lord gaue Abraham, Genes. 17. 1. *Walke before me, and be vpright*. This thing also was practised by Enoch, who for this cause is said *to walke before God*.

2. Esteeme of euerie present day as of the day of thy death: and therefore liue as though thou were dying; and doe those good duties euery day, that thou wouldest doe if thou were dying. This is christian watchfulnesse, and remember it.

3. Make catalogues and billes of thine owne sinnes, specially of those sinnes that haue most dishonoured God, and wounded thine owne conscience: set them before thee often, specially then when thou hast any particular occasion of renewing thy repentance, that thy heart by this dolefull sight may be further humbled. This was Dauids practise when he considered his waies and turned his feete to Gods commandements. Psal. 119. 57. And when hee confessed the sinnes of his youth. Psal. 25. This was Iobs practise, when hee said he was not able to answere one of a thousand of his sinnes vnto God. Iob. 9. 1.

When thou first openest thine eies in a morning, pray to God, and giue him thankes heartily: God then shall haue his honour, and

and thy heart shall be the better for it the whole day following. For wee see in experience, that vessels keepe long the taste of that liquor wherewith they are first seasoned. And when thou liest down let that be the last also: for thou knowest not, whether fallen asleep, thou shalt euer rise againe aliue. Good therefore it is that thou shouldest giue vp thy selfe into the hands of God, whilst thou art waking.

5. Labour to see and feele thy spirituall pouertie, that is, to see the want of grace in thy selfe, specially those inward corruptions, of vnbeleefe, pride, selfeloue, &c. Labour to bee displeased with thy selfe: and labour to feele that by reason of them thou standest in need of euery drop of the blood of Christ, to heale and cleanse thee from these wantes: and let this practise take such place with thee, that if thou bee demaunded, what in thine estimation is the vilest of the creatures vpon earth? thine heart and conscience may answere with a loude voice, I, euen I, by reason of mine owne sinnes: and againe, if thou be demaunded what is the best thing in the world for thee? thy heart and conscience may answere againe with a strong and loud crie, one drop of the blood of Christ to wash away my sinnes.

6. Shewe thy selfe to be a member of Christ, and a seruant of God, not onely in the generall calling of a christian, but also in the particular calling in which thou art placed. It is not enough for a magistrate to be a Christian man, but he must also be a christian magistrate: it is not enough for a master of a family to be a Christian man, or a Christian in the Church, but hee must also be a Christian in his familie, and in the trade which he followeth daily. Not euery one that is a common hearer of the word, and a frequenter of the Lordes table, is therefore a good Christian, vnlesse his conuersation in his priuat house and in his priuate affaires and dealings be suitable. There is a man to be seene, what he is.

7. Search the Scriptures, to see what is sinne, and what is not sinne in euery action: this done, carrie in thy heart a constant and resolute purpose, not to sinne in any thing: for faith and the purpose of sinning cannot euer stand togither.

8. Let thine endeuour bee suitable to thy purpose: and there-

fore exercise thy selfe to eschew euery sinne, and to obey GOD in euery one of his commaundements, that pertaine either to the generall calling of a Christian, or to thy particular calling. Thus did good Iosias, who turned vnto God with all his heart, according *to all* the law of Moses 1. King. 25. 25. and thus did Zacharie and Elizabeth that walked *in all* the commmaundements of God without reproofe. Luk. 1. 6.

9. If at any time, against thy purpose and resolution, thou be ouertaken with any sinne little or great, lie not in it, but speedily recouer thy selfe by repentance: humble thy selfe, confessing thine offence, and by prayer intreating the Lord to pardon the same, and that earnestly, till such time as thou findest thy conscience truly pacified, and thy care to eschew the same sinne encreased.

10. Consider often of the right and proper end of thy life in this world, which is not to seeke profit, honour, pleasure, but that in seruing of men, wee might serue God in our callings. God could, if it so pleased him, preserue man without the ministerie of man, but his pleasure is to fulfill his worke and will in the perseruation of our bodies, and saluation of our soules, by the imploiment of men in his seruice, euery one according to his vocation. Neither is there so much as a bondslaue, but hee must in and by his faithfull seruice to his master, serue the Lord. Men therefore doe commonly profane their labours and liues, by aiming at a wrong end, when all their care consisteth onely in getting sufficient maintenance for them and theirs, for the obtaining of credit, riches, and carnall commodities. For thus men serue themselues, and not God, or men: much lesse doe they serue God in seruing of men.

11. Giue all diligence to make thy election sure, and to gather manifold tokens thereof. For this cause obserue the works of Gods prouidence, loue, and mercie, both in thee and vpon thee, from time to time: for the serious consideration of them, and the laying of them together when they are many and seuerall, minister much direction, assurance of Gods fauour and comfort. This was the practise of Dauid, 1. Sam. 17. 33. Psal. 23. all.

12. Thinke euermore thy present estate whatsoeuer it be, to bee the best estate for thee: because whatsoeuer befalles thee, though

it bee ſickneſſe or any other affliction, [illegible]
good prouidence of God. That this may the better be done, [illegible]
to ſee and acknowledge a prouidence of God, aſwell in pouertie as in abundance, aſwell in diſgrace as good report, aſwell in ſickneſſe as in health, aſwell in life as in death.

13. Pray continually, I meane not by ſolemne and ſet prayer, but by ſecret and inward eiaculations of the heart, that is, by a continuall eleuation of minde vnto Chriſt ſitting at the right hand of God the father, and that either by praier or giuing of thankes ſo often as any occaſion ſhall be offered.

14. Thinke often of the worſt and moſt grieuous things that may befall thee either in life or death for the name of Chriſt: make a reckoning of them, and prepare thy ſelf to beare them: that when they come, they may not ſeeme ſtrange, and be borne more eaſily.

15. Make conſcience of idle, vaine, vnhoneſt, and vngodlie thoughts, for theſe are the ſeedes and beginnings of actuall ſinne in word and deede. This want of care in ordering and compoſing of our thoughts, is often puniſhed with a fearefull temptation in the very thought, called of Diuines, *Tentatio blaſphemiarum*, a tentation of blaſphemies.

16. When any good motion or affection riſeth in the heart, ſuffer it not to paſſe away, but feede it by reading, meditating, praying.

17. Whatſoeuer good thing thou goeſt about, whether it be in word or deede, doe it not in a conceit of thy ſelfe, or in the pride of thy heart, but in humilitie, aſcribing the power whereby thou doeſt thy worke, and the praiſe thereof to God, otherwiſe thou ſhalt finde by experience, God will curſe thy beſt doings.

18. Deſpiſe not ciuill honeſtie: good conſcience and good maners muſt go together: therefore remember to make conſcience of lying, and of cuſtomable ſwearing in common talke. Contend not either in deede or word with any man: be curteous and gentle to all good and bad: beare with mens wants and frailties, as haſtines, frowardnes, ſelfe-liking, curiouſnes, &c. paſſing by them as being not perceiued: returne not euill for euill, but rather good for euill: vſe meate, drinke, and apparell in that manner & meaſure, that

[illegible] expresse the hidden grace of thy heart: Striue not to goe beyond any, vnlesse it be in good things: goe before thine equals, in giuing of honour, rather then in taking of it: make conscience of thy worde, and let it be as a band: professe not more outwardly then thou hast inwardly in heart: oppresse or defraud no man in bargaining: in all companies either doe good, or take good.

FINIS.

William Parkinson

Ambrosij Salisburij Liber: p.r vij.s

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William Parkinson p.r vij.s

William Parkinson

1745